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ABSTRACT

Arnolt Bronnen's complex monodrama, "Ostpolzug," sought to counter the German anxieties and pessimism following World War I and also provided a theatrical vehicle for experimentation--intensely symbolic and electric--with film techniques of that period. Premiered in January 1926 and directed by the expressionist classics interpreter, Leopold Jessner, the play reflected Bronnen's personal solution to both his own conflicts and the tense national situation by dramatizing the eternal dialogue which modern man conducts with the past. The fate of Alexander the Great merges with that of a contemporary Alexander as he embarks upon an ultimately self-destructive path of conquest to the East. Both the nature of the monologue--repeated response to unseen characters--and the chiarosco technique aided actor Fritz Kortner's dramatic interpretation. Reaction of both drama critics and audience was typically violent for a Bronnen premiere, although applause remained dominant. (Footnotes are included.) (JM)

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THE THEATRICAL EVENT AS HISTORY:

ARNOLT BRONNEN'S OSTPOLZUG IN PRODUCTION

by

Glen Gadberry

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On the 29th of January, 1926, one of the most unusual works of German drama premiered at the Berlin Prussian State Theatre: Arnolt Bronnen's Ostpolzug ("Journey to the East Pole"). The play was directed by the expressionist interpreter of the classics, Leopold Jessner, and enacted by his leading actor, Fritz Kortner. There was but one actor, for Ostpolzug is a nine-scene, two-hour monodrama.[1] With Ostpolzug, Bronnen sought to counter not only his own anxiety, but also the unpleasant realities of German disillusionment and pessimism that were the aftermath of World War I. In an age forceably ruptured from its past and suffering for it, Bronnen sought to provide a calming and restoring synthesis.

This study is justified by the belief that the individual drama in performance is a key to an understanding of both theatre history at a particular time, and more importantly, the spiritual temper of an historical period. The dramatist, living within the intellectual and emotional streams of his era, registers his own yearnings, feelings and subjective evaluations of the period in the text. On the stage, the written drama, the lesser entity, achieves a greater reality through the embellishments offered by director, actor and designer. The result is theatre, a human form that records the rational and irrational pressures and tensions of a people more clearly that can be formulated by the objectivization of events; that is, by more conventional historical approaches. We are offered an image of an age in terms of human values, not in terms of institutions. The premiere of Ostpolzug, in particular, is revealing of both theatrical and cultural history, for on the one hand, it exemplifies the artistic techniques of some of the leading theatre practitioners of the Weimar Republic, and on

the other, the drama and production offered the German people the alternatives they had to face in their age of transition. Those alternatives, the images of the age and of Weimar theatre, are what we shall try to discover and recreate.

Bronnen remains known today primarily for his shifting political allegiences than for his artistic endeavors. Born in Vienna in 1895, Bronnen emerged in Berlin as an anarchistic enfant terrible. In the late 1920's, he embraced an abberation of the political right: National Bolshevism, which, to Bronnen, tried to realize a feasible union of passionate German nationalism and a vigorous Marxism.[2] During the Third Reich, Bronnen worked in various offices of the propaganda ministry, but because of the question of a possible Jewish heritage, which he vehemently denied, he was soon stripped of his official positions. He became an inner emigré,[3] held suspect by the Gestapo, and, eventually, a member of the Austrian underground. Following the war, he emerged a hard-line Marxist, engaged in Party activity in Austria. Upon the heels of innuendo and accusation regarding his questionable political allegience between 1933 and 1945, although cleared of any charges of complicity by Allied investigation,[4] Bronnen resettled in East Berlin. He died there in 1959.

Bronnen's sixty-four years had been a life of paradox: the critic Hans Weigel has mused that if one had to choose a motto for Bronnen's life, "it would have to read: 'Either, and Or!'"[5] Others were less kind, dismissing Bronnen as a despicable political opportunist.[6] Bronnen answered that his conversions were necessary to effect the final and sincere conversion to "A FIGHTER FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD IN THE SENSE OF MARX AND LENIN, AS A SERVANT OF THE WORKING CLASS."[7]

Bronnen, a bemonocled, intense, angry young man, had been first thrust into the public eye with the 1922 premiere of his drama of father-son conflict,

Vatermord ("Parricide"), a brutal work steeped in excessive violence and perverse sexuality. Until 1926, six additional dramas and two novellas were published.[8] Ostpolzug, completed by Spring of 1925, marked the end of the playwright's first artistic period.

The monodramatic form of Ostpolzug was a result of Bronnen's reflections upon the term "Epic Theatre." Bertolt Brecht, an early friend of Bronnen's and the most well-known theoretician of the epic idea, was experimenting with a variety of dramatic and theatrical techniques in the mid-1920's; it was to be some years before he began to formulate and record a definite approach.[9] But by 1922, critics had seen in Bronnen's dramas the examples of a new kind of theatre, an "Epic Theatre."[10] Bronnen was confused by the term; he writes

> what did this catchword imply? It implied a drama, that stretches out beyond the theatre and the forms it dictates; it implied bredth, it implied the inclusion of all time, it implied [new] content. Epic theatre therefore wanted to move from characterization, from theatrical dynamics, from formal dialectics, to narrated events. . . . true epic knows but one commentator. Therefore the true epic drama must know but one dramatic person.[11]

This "one dramatic person" became the drama's one dramatic character; yet this single character has a dual existence, past and present.

Prior to completing the drama, Bronnen was sunk into deep depression. His self-proclaimed "spiritual anarchy" and "cynical pessimism" were fostered by a variety of personal conflicts and by the tense national situation. By his own account, he found a private solution "in the obligation for total consciousness, in the culling up of all sub-strata of our existence. . . ." Bronnen's attempt to "project his subconscious" led to the dramatization of

"a dialectic portrait of the man of today, a portion of the eternal dialogue, which the present conducts with the past."[12] As a result, Ostpolzug is a drama which offers alternatives of behavior without surrendering a monodramatic epic structure. To turn to the realm of metaphore, the drama is like a coin revolving on its verticle axis: the obverse depicts the fate of Alexander the Great; the reverse, that of a modern day Alexander. The steady rotation causes lines to overlap and blend as the scenes of past and present alternate; in the seventh scene, both sides of the spinning coin merge into one image, one character, bridging thousands of years. Yet, as both sides of the coin are a unity, both Alexanders are one.

A critic concluded that Ostpolzug glorified "the human will;" it was a drama infused with a "conqueror consciousness."[13] It is also an affirmation of the present. Alexander of Macedon, a cowardly and dependent crown prince, becomes king upon the murder of his father. His dream is to conquer the world of men, and he sets out upon an ultimately self-destructive path of conquest to the East; he dies, broken and disillusioned, in Babylon. The modern day Alexander, unscrupulous and independent, accepts the challenge of Mount Everest, the East Pole in Bronnen's geography.[14] Yet Everest is also a moral pole, the ultimate test of human endurance and strength of will. In the final scene, Alexander stands triumphant on the storm-swept summit:

> This was the East Pole, this was the unconquerable Earth,
> Here, where I stand, religions beneath my feet,
> To be sure, in a storm and uncertain even of the next minutes,
> But yet somewhat greater than what was determined for me,
> Yet somewhat further, yet somewhat stronger, yet somewhat
> more eternal. . . .
> So the deeds, the events happen slowly,
> Many wishes are old by thousands of years,
> But irresistibly the agents achieve the mystery,
> And the winning of immortality is nigh.[15]

Leopold Jessner accepted the drama for production, and assumed the direction. It was his second Bronnen premiere, a third was to follow in 1928. Jessner's theatre was one of experimentation, of intense symbol and electric performance. He approached the production with the techniques of the then contemporary film, a procedure he attempted eight months earlier for his production of Bronnen's erotic and nationalistic treatment of the Separatist movement, Rheinische Rebellen ("Rebels of the Rhineland").[16] For Ostpolzug, after the houselights were dimmed, Jessner projected a map on the curtain, and with a light, charted the route of the double Alexanders from the Hellespont to Everest. Between scenes, to allow time for Kortner to change costume, and the stage hands to change the settings, Jessner projected the geographic location of the new episode, and the scene title which Bronnen's script provided: "Across the Hellespont," "The Gordian Knot," and so on, suggesting the printed titles and portions of dialogue used in the silent film.[17]

A filmic approach was made the more appropriate by the requirements of Bronnen's text, requirements that strain the capabilities of the stage. The playwright had written film scenarios, one in collaboration with Brecht, and some years earlier had sworn he would devote himself totally to the film.[18] In Ostpolzug, the summit of Everest, a rope climb over a glacier, the barge of Alexander the Great, that glides slowly past the huge walls of Babylon, and a truck column crossing the rugged terrain of Nepal, to become nearly enmired in the rapid currents of a mountain river, owe more to filmic inspiration than to then contemporary theatrical practice.

The technique was reinforced by Jessner's designers, Robert Herlth and Walter Röhrig. Ostpolzug was the only major drama of the period for which

the artistic designers worked; their métier was the film. Röhrig had been artistic co-designer (with Hermann Warm and Walter Reimann) for the epoch-making Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari ("The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," 1919). He then joined with Herlth to Collaborate on Fritz Lang's "stylized fantastic" Der müde Tod (usually translated as "Destiny," 1921), and on F. W. Murnau's "uncannily distorted" Tartuffe (1925). Immediately following their work for Jessner, the designers returned to film, collaborating on that "masterpiece of the supernatural," Murnau's Faust (1926).[19]

The principal technique exploited by the two in film was a heavy use of Chiaroscuro. For the 1920's, so the film historian Lotte Eisner feels, their technique "represents a sort of twilight of the German soul, expressing itself in shadowy, enigmatic interiors, or in misty, insubstantial landscapes."[20] Herlth and Röhrig transferred their film experience to Jessner's production: the scenes of Ostpolzug were dimly lit, the imposing set pieces surrounded by unfathomable darkness. Fantastic lighting was used to pierce the pervading gloom. The final scene is a case in point: it is night, in the center of the stage the summit of Mount Everest is barely visible; the mountain stretches down into stormy, impenetrable depths (a fog machine was used to mask the setting). Occasional tiny flashes of light, caused by fireworks of celebration set off miles below, mysteriously highlight the scene and the emerging Alexander. Having achieved the "Triumph of Possibility," the scene title which had just been projected on the curtain, Alexander launches a flare that momentarily bathes the stage in a burst of red light. Throughout, the contrast of light and darkness provided the major scenic effect.

Jessner personally undertook the cutting of the script, parring down the monologue to just under two hours, and delivered it to Kortner. Kortner's

most famous roles of the early 1920's were the title roles in Jessner's productions of Frank Wedekind's Marquis von Keith (1920) and Shakespeare's Richard III (1920), the latter production introducing the famous "Jessner-treppen." Powerful both vocally and physically, Kortner based his acting style upon careful technique. He was to prove "a dark Alexander with Mephisto eyes."[21]

Bronnen and Kortner met frequently to discuss the work and the interpretation. Although the playwright admitted that he understood the drama no better than Kortner,[22] he explained that the two Alexanders were a single dramatic character, one character "with two souls, that struggle with each other, dialectically, in the established past, and in the uncertain, deceptive present. . . ." But Bronnen's explanation "had too few perspectives for Kortner's more restrained intellect."[23] Instead, Kortner and Jessner decided to split the role into two distinct personages with separate patterns of behavior, separate patterns of speech and separate costume. In a vocal range that stretched from "despairing groans to bellowing triumph," and at a tempo that was "ever more vigorous, finally a storm," Kortner played Alexander the Great with a "strong, penetrating pathos," and made the modern Alexander a man of "deliberate sarcasm, laden with irony."[24] The result was to reduce the playwright's dramatization of that "eternal dialogue" to mere historical parallelism, yet by splitting the role, Kortner's strenuous task of maintaining the monologue was much simplified.

The nature of the monologue itself assisted Kortner. It is not a two hour soliloque, in the sense that the actor iterates and responds only to the thoughts of the character; rather, Alexander repeatedly responds to characters that he sees and we do not. As one critic commented, Bronnen had

"smuggled" elements of dialogue into his monologue.[25] The drama begins at the royal residence in Elaus; a shadow falls across the stage, then disappears. Alexander rushes on: "Halt! / What are you searching for in the palace! / Someone is prowling around here in the palace, perhaps a spy of my father's?"[26] In the fourth scene, Alexander of the present is soliciting funds for his enterprise from four magnates in Kabul. The center of the stage is occupied by four high-backed chairs that face upstage. "One cannot determine," so the stage direction reads, "whether anyone is sitting in them."[27] The fifth scene reveals the tent of the ancient Alexander. The shadows of his guards fall across the stage and at the left, a stone wall is being built. The masons are invisible behind the ever growing structure; all that we see are blocks being set into place. The action proper begins with another shadow, moving ever closer. Alexander is frightened, he hurls a spear offstage, we hear a scream and see the shadow disappear: the murder of Clitus. Offstage screams and footsteps, onstage shadows and mysterious movements repeatedly occur, increasing the tension, and providing Kortner with the external stimuli to which he could react.

The use of shadows particularly appealed to the playwright, the director and his artistic designers. In Jessner's production of Richard III, upon Richard's lines "Shine out fair sun, 'til I have bought a glass, / That I may see my shadow as I pass," the director caused Kortner's shadow, huge and menacing, to be cast upon the stage. In the same manner, shadow, a primary constituent of the designers' chiaroscuro technique, was used repeatedly in the text and in the production.

Critical reaction was typical for a Bronnen premiere. Ever since the tumultuous appearance of Vatermord, Bronnen, along with Brecht (the two were

invariably linked by the critical and popular imagination) were the center of a heated battle. In one corner stood those conservatives clustered around the sarcastically witty, self-proclaimed "Star" of Berlin criticism, Alfred Kerr, who was to dismiss Bronnen, Brecht and their dramas as "Bums without content. Explosions for their own sake. Emptyness with tempo."[28] In the other corner stood those younger and more liberal critics headed by Herbert Ihering, the most important and clear-sighted theatrical critic of the Weimar era. As the dramas of Bronnen came to production, the battles in the Berlin and other major German newspapers and journals became more heated and wide-reaching, eventually drawing directors and producers into the fray. Ostpolzug was no exception.

Kerr, fond of comparing Bronnen to the 18th century hack dramatist August von Kotzebue and the 19th century's Hermann Sudermann, dismissed the work as a "totally shallow, flimsy thing; prototype of ruffled-up emptyness."[29] Julius Bab and H. Bormann objected to the Sudermann-like use of trivial theatrical tricks and sensationalism.[30] Kurt Aram called the play and production a "blown-up dramatic miscarriage," and Alfred Klaar, a "wild delirium expressionis."[31] Among the positive reviews, Ihering wrote that despite internal problems, the play was "magnificent."[32] Walther Steinthal, similarly noted weaknesses, but found life in the play: "Since yesterday," he wrote of the premiere, "I love this Arnolt Bronnen. . . ."[33] "Bronnen has finally proved himself a writer" was the conclusion of Moritz Loeb, and Max Freyhan viewed Ostpolzug as a highly interesting experiment that could have failed, but "this work of Bronnen's is clarity, conquering clarity, faith, the frenzied affirmation of life. And that clinched it."[34]

While their analyses with regard to the play itself generally followed past loyalties, the critics were nearly unanimous in their accolades for Fritz Kortner, who was to take the role on tour throughout Germany. Beyond praise for his endurance and skill in maintaining the monologue, "One believed this beaming voice, one believed these eyes and hands," so concluded Kurt Pinthus.[35] Franz Leppmann felt that Kortner had mastered the role "and its tremendous demands in such a way, that we will not so soon see his equal."[36] Interestingly enough, Ihering disagreed, for he felt that Kortner had destroyed the rhythm, structure, and hence the meaning of the lines and of the play. Ihering was also vehement in his condemnation of Jessner's filmic accoutrements, joining with many other critics who were incensed that the venerable State Theatre had been turned into a movie house.[37] But Ihering did not object upon the grounds that the sanctity of the State Theatre had been violated, but rather that the nature of the drama had been destroyed. The true direction of the monodrama is its language, a principal reason for Bronnen's earlier successes. But that was not the approach of Kortner, Jessner, or his designers. The form and flow of Ostpolzug cannot brook delay:

> It cannot bear scene curtains that make noise and interrupt. It cannot bear the minutes-long costume changes of the actor. Why the title projections before each new scene. . . ? Why the careful and time killing costuming? The play is sketched in sharp and firm outline. The performance dissolved that outline and romanticized it. Certainly a grandiose achievement of Jessner and his architects, but a false, irritating production that turned away from the character of the play.[38]

Audience response, like that of the critics, was typically violent for a Bronnen premiere. Although somewhat alienated by the incessant monologue, they went along peaceably enough until the sixth scene, Kortner's strongest.

A large portion of the audience broke into applause and were answered by boos and whistles from the rest. The disturbance grew more vigorous. Subsequent arguments and threats brought the police present to intervene and the houselights were turned on. Kurt Aram commented: "The lighting, by which not only mouths but also muscles could be gauged, calmed everyone very effectively." The houselights remained lit for the remainder of the performance. The seventh scene, revealing Alexander hanging precariously by a rope, "yet" the unsympathetic Aram noted, "not for a moment [keeping] his mouth shut," was greeted by laughter.[39] At the end of the play, the earlier altercation resumed, but applause remained dominant. Kortner, Jessner and Bronnen made repeated curtain calls.

The ultimate meaning of Ostpolzug in production cannot be divorced from the time and place of the premiere. Although 1926 saw a period of greater stabilization for Germany, the physical and psychological effects of foreign occupations and loss of territory, crippling war reparations and subsequent inflation, assassinations and Putsches from the political right and left, were still haunting the German people. In an era between cataclysms, under an ineffective government, Germans were futily seeking security in an insecure world. Bronnen's Ostpolzug sought to answer the pessimism of the age. Although the ideational content of the drama is not "particularly deep," wrote Ernst Heilborn, "one can confidently say yes to it."[40] Herbert Ihering put the drama and the age into proper perspective when he wrote:

> A generation, ripped loose from all connection to tradition and development by a world war, . . . [a generation] without experience, . . . without neighbors, . . . without transition, . . . must not only come to an understanding with its predecessors, as each must, but must first discover its own foundations. . . . [For the conqueror of Everest], the mechanics of the age are neither lamented,

> nor admired. They are rather a stimulus. They are absorbed into the will. A new heroism is born. . . . This magnificent will to begin, this "conqueror consciousness" makes Bronnen's "Ostpolzug" an event of the theatre. . . . Whether future generations will still know works like "Ostpolzug," is a matter of indifference. It is still a beginning. The present is set in order. And that no doubt is a triumph.[41]

Ihering was writing without the advantage of historical hindsight, oblivious to the destructive turn the future was shortly to take. Yet in 1926, what Germany desparately needed was a new beginning; Bronnen offered one. He had seen and recorded the alternatives, which Jessner and his designers popularized into a theatrical tour de force for Fritz Kortner. It was truly unfortunate that the German people found its new heroism, not in Bronnen's coldly realistic Alexander, but in National Socialism, and that the new conqueror consciousness was to prove an ugly abberation of the racism and imperialism of an Alexander the Great.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Rousseau's Pygmalion (premiered at the Comédie Française October 30, 1775) and Goethe's Proserpina (1776/77) make use of a monodramatic technique, but each is relatively brief, Pygmalion running to but 264 lines and Proserpina to 271. Each ends by breaking the monologue: Pygmalion exchanges dialogue with Galatea, the statue brought to life by divine intervention, and Proserpina speaks with a chorus of "unseen Fates." Considering its length, Bronnen's monodrama appears to be an unique instance, certainly in the drama of the West.

[2]The National Bolshevists encompassed a wide range of elitist intellectuals (Ernst Niekisch, Hans Zehrer, Ernst Jünger) and their disparate philosophies. "One cannot say with certainty, whether they belonged to the right or to the left," so concludes Jürgen Rühle in his Literatur and Revolution; Die Schriftsteller und der Kommunismus, Kiepenheuer & Witsch (Cologne and Berlin, 1960), p. 184. Bronnen was particularly close to the circles around Niekisch and Jünger.

[3]The term "inner emigré" refers to those persons who were in opposition to the Third Reich, but who remained in Germany. Facing the possibilities of arrest and internment, or worse, these people could not publically register their distaste for the government; nor were the usual communication channels--newspapers, radio, publishing houses--open to them. With regard to literature, authors of the inner emigration would continue to create. To use the terminology of the East German critic Wolfgang Brekle in "Die antifaschistische Literatur in Deutschland (1933-1945), Weimarer Beiträge, XVI, n. 6 (1970), p. 71, authors of the inner emigration would write either "inner German non-fascist literature," meaning works consciously aloof from Nazism and its distorted philosophy, or, "inner German anti-fascist literature." The use of parable and historical parallels were the most frequently used methods of the latter group. Bronnen's dramas "N" (1936) and Gloriana (1941), using the historical Napoleonic and Elizabethan periods, were intended to be anti-fascist, but are closer to the non-fascist persuasion. For an excellent account and explanation of the phenomenon of Inner Emigration, see Reinhold Grimm, "Innere Emigration als Lebensform," Exil und innere Emigration, ed. R. Grimm and J. Hermand (Third Wisconsin Workshop), Athenäum Verlag (Frankfurt/Main, 1972), pp. 31-73.

[4]Upon the testimony of various members of the Austrian underground that Bronnen had been active in the resistance since August 1943, upon documentation proving that Bronnen had been forbidden to publish in the Third Reich from 1937 onwards, and that he had been arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo and Wehrmacht, Bronnen was acquited of charges of complicity and his name cleared to the satisfaction of the American tribunal. Relevant documents are on file in the Akademie der Künste, West Berlin.

[5]Hans Weigel, "Unternehmen Vatermord. Bemerkungen über den Schriftsteller Arnolt Bronnen," Der Monat, VI, n. 69 (June, 1954), p. 301.

[6]Cf. Hans Weigel, "Unternehmen Vatermord," Jürgen Rühle Literatur und Revolution, and Jürgen Schröder "Arnolt Bronnen," in Expressionismus als Literatur; Gesammelte Studien, ed. Wolfgang Rothe, Francke Verlag (Bern and Munich, 1969), pp. 585-594.

[7]"Bronnen Contra Bronnen," p. 6, unpublished autobiographic statement, in the author's literary remains, East Berlin. The use of all capital letters is one of the many departures from accepted German punctuation which Bronnen employed. In his Tage mit Bertolt Brecht; Geschichte einer unvollendeten Freundschaft, Verlag Kurt Desch (Munich, 1960), p. 77, Bronnen noted that in the early 1920's Brecht adopted his practice of writing without punctuation or, at that time, without any capital letters.

[8]Those works insured Bronnen's inclusion into that abberation of Expressionism termed "Black Expressionism" by Günther Rühle in Theater für die Republik 1917-1933, im Spiegel der Kritik, S. Fischer Verlag (Frankfurt/Main, 1967). pp. 24-25. As Rühle categorized them, the Black Expressionists depicted "the total destruction of idealism and the belief in a new humanity; it was the progressive turning to the instincts and sadism of mankind. [They wrote dramas] which overflowed with lust and sexuality, with the pathological urge to murder and perversion: a theatre of brutality, infested with the frenzy of sex, with carnal pleasure, and with abomination." In addition to Bronnen, leading Black Expressionists were the early Brecht, Hans Henny Jahnn, Ernst Weiss and Hermann Essig.

[9]Brecht's first unified statements were the notes to Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny and to the Dreigroschenoper, published in 1930 and 1931, respectively. Brecht called Ostpolzug "the most exposed drama to this time," which sought to establish the Epic Theatre; in G. Rühle, p. 678.

[10]In 1922 Otto Zarek in Munich published scenes of Bronnen's sexual comedy Die Exzesse ("Excesses") as an example of epic theatre; and in 1924 Jo Lherman termed Bronnen's Anarchie in Sillian ("Anarchy in Sillian," 1924) an example of the epic idea, and the Katalaunische Schlacht ("Catalaunian Battle," 1924) an example of epic theatre; Zarek in Bronnen, arnolt bronnen gibt zu protokoll, beiträge zur geschichte des modernen schriftstellers, Rowohlt Verlag (Hamburg, 1954), p. 144; Lherman, "Arnolt Bronnen. Ein erotischer Komplex und zwei Aufführungen in Frankfurt a. M.," Bronnen clipping file, Schiller Nationalmuseum, Marbach am Neckar (hereafter, "Marbach").

[11]arnolt bronnen gibt zu protokoll, p. 144.

[12]"Ein Biogramm," p. 9, unpublished autobiographic statement, in the author's literary remains, East Berlin.

[13]Moritz Loeb, "Bronnens 'Ostpolzug'. Das Schauspiel mit einem Schauspieler im Staatstheater," Marbach.

[14]A disasterous British attempt at Everest occured in 1924, some months before the completion of Ostpolzug, and no doubt encouraged Bronnen to write the drama.

[15]Ostpolzug, Ernst Rowohlt Verlag (Berlin, 1926), pp. 80-81.

[16]The Rheinische Rebellen premiered at the Prussian State Theatre May 16, 1925, staring Gerda Muller, Agnes Straub and Albert Steinrück. As he was to do in Ostpolzug, Jessner made use of the projection of locations, five German cities of the Rhineland, casting them in "flaming lettering" upon the curtain.

[17]On an Easter walk in 1922, Brecht and Bronnen decided to write a film together, which Brecht called "Die zweite Sintflut" ("The Second Deluge") and Bronnen, the "Robinsonade auf Assuncion." As the script for the silent film was sent to the film company, the plot was as follows: two men and a woman are stranded on an island which has the totally deserted city of a super-civilization. The city lacks even the most minute requirements for everyday life and activity; for these "trifling things," Bronnen writes in his autobiography, arnolt bronnen gibt zu protokoll, p. 115, "like starting a fire, writing, or moving about, gigantic machines must be set into action. And in this uneasy atmosphere, the battle of the two men for the woman unfolds." As the film was produced however, under the title Die Insel der Tränen ("The Isle of Tears"), it departed totally from the original scenario. For Bronnen, the product was a "cheap, lachrymose Kitsch theatre." Both he and Brecht disowned the film. Disillusioned by his career in the theatre, and impressed by the new possibilities in the film, Bronnen resolved to devote himself totally to the new genre. To mark the shift, which was to be short lived, Bronnen published his "Epitaph" in Der Querschnitt, III, n. 1/2 (May, 1923), pp. 59-60. "Epitaph" catalogues the limitations of theatre and the opening vistas offered by the film, and contains sentiments worthy of Brecht: "Where everything stinks, theatre can't smell sweet by itself." (p. 59)

[18]According to Bronnen in his autobiography, p. 153, Kortner seized upon this scene as the basis of his interpretation, for in the man who must throw all his possessions out of the truck to save himself from floundering in the raging river, Kortner saw a way to incorporate his interpretation of Wedekind's swindling Marquis von Keith, a role which made him famous in 1920.

[19]The descriptive terms are from Lotte Eisner's The Haunted Screen; Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt, tr. from the French (L'Ecran Démoniaque) by Roger Greaves, University of California Press (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969).

[20]Eisner, p. 8.

[21]Hugo Kubsch, "Bronnen: 'Ostpolzug'. (Staatliches Schauspielhaus)," Marbach.

[22]arnolt bronnen gibt zu protokoll, p. 153.

[23]Bronnen, Begegnungen mit Schauspielern, ed. Harald Kleinschmidt, Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft (East Berlin, 1967), p. 93. The "Twenty Portraits" of actors and actresses, principally of the Weimar period, was published posthumously by Bronnen's stepson, Herr Kleinschmidt.

[24]Respectively, Kurt Pinthus, "'Ostpolzug' im Staatstheater. Arnolt Bronnens neues Schauspiel"; Hans W. Fischer, "Bronnens 'Ostpolzug'. Uraufführung im Staatstheater"; Franz Köppen, "Arnolt Bronnen. 'Ostpolzug'. Uraufführung im Staatstheater," Marbach.

[25]M. J. (Monty Jacobs?), "Bronnens Monodrama. Von unserem Korrespondenten," Marbach.

[26]Ostpolzug, p. 11.

[27]Ostpolzug, p. 37.

[28]"Die launische Schlacht," Berliner Tageblatt, Dec. 18, 1924, Marbach.

[29]Kerr in Berliner Tageblatt, Feb. 3, 1926, in G. Rühle, p. 644.

[30]Respectively, Julius Bab, "'Ostpolzug'". Bronnen im Straatstheater"; H. H. Bormann, "Staatstheater. Arnolt Bronnen: 'Ostpolzug'. Uraufführung," Marbach.

[31]Kurt Aram, "'Ostpolzug', Schauspiel von Arnolt Bronnen. Uraufführung im Staatstheater," Marbach; Alfred Klaar, review of premiere, Vossische Zeitung, Berlin (Jan. 30, 1926), in G. Rühle, p. 680.

[32]Review of premiere, Part I, Berliner Börsen-Courier (Jan. 30, 1926) in G. Rühle, p. 681.

[33]Walter Steinthal, "Ostpolzug. Uraufführung im Staatstheater," Marbach.

[34]Moritz Loeb, "Bronnens 'Ostpolzug'. Das Schauspiel mit einem schauspieler im Staatstheater"; Max Freyhan, "Arnolt Bronnen: 'Ostpolzug'. Staats-Theater," Marbach.

[35]Kurt Pinthus, "'Ostpolzug' im Staatstheater. Arnolt Bronnens neues Schauspiel," Marbach.

[36]Franz Leppmann, "'Ostpolzug' Bronnenpremiere im Staatstheater," Marbach.

[37]Herbert Ihering, review of premiere, Part II, Berliner Börsen-Courier (Jan. 31, 1926), in G. Rühle, p. 682.

[38]Ihering, Part II, in G. Rühle, p. 682.

[39]Kurt Aram, Marbach.

[40]Ernst Heilborn, review of Ostpolzug, Die Literatur, XXVIII (1925-1926), p. 357.

[41]Ihering, Part I, in G. Rühle, pp. 681-682, order transposed.